



EMPATHY + UNDERSTANDING = *hope for trauma victims*

Maria Avila-Gengenbacher developed a passion for helping children and so at an early age, she began working with her family, teaching religious education at St. Matthias Parish in Huntington Park. Because she wanted to help children and families overcome challenges and build on their strengths, Maria turned to the field of psychology as a profession.

After graduating from St. Matthias High School in 1983, she pursued degrees in psychology from Mount St. Mary's University and Pepperdine University. She ultimately received her Psy.D. Doctoral degree at California School of Professional Psychology. With this educational background, Maria has been a licensed Clinical Psychologist since 2006.

In her more than 25-year career in that field, Maria has worked at Jordan High School in Watts; Children, Youth and Family Consortium in Alhambra; and The San Fernando Valley Child Guidance Clinic; and as the Clinical Director at Hope Street Family Center at California Hospital Medical Center in downtown Los Angeles. Most of her work and service have been with the Spanish-speaking community.

Maria gets to know her clients, developing an understanding of their relationships and experiences, and how these have affected them along life's path. With empathy and understanding, Maria guides her clients to build on their strengths, to develop self-awareness and new skills, and to acquire a sense of resolution.

An adjunct professor in the graduate program in Marriage and Family Therapy at Mount St. Mary's University, Maria mentors her students, helping them to empower others to serve the community.

Maria is currently in private practice at Crossroads Institute in the Los Alamitos area. She continues to volunteer and provide community service with local agencies and on boards. With over 25 years of service in community mental health, providing therapy to families and children, especially those who have experienced trauma, child abuse, domestic violence and crisis, Maria gives hope to those in need.